

REMARKS

Following a careful review of the prior art cited by the Examiner and particularly U.S. Patent No. 5,319,548 to Germain and U.S. Patent No. 5,781,892 to Hunt, the claims have been amended in a manner to clarify the patentable aspects of the present invention.

Claims 72-87, 93, 101, 105 and 107-108 have been canceled, and newly written claim 109 is the sole independent claim presented for the consideration of the Examiner. Claims 88-92, 94-100, 102-104 and 106 remain in the case and are all dependent upon claim 109.

Claim 109 sets forth a golf tee-time reservation apparatus that provides access to a plurality of individual golf course reservation systems, at least some of which use different protocols. The present invention thus allows tee-time reservations to be made with respect to golf course reservation system that are not part of a common system but instead have their own different protocols. The body of claim 109 sets forth a plurality of user input modules which are distributed throughout a wide geographic area that includes sites that are remote from one another. An interface module has a data link with each of the user input modules to process tee-time requests as real time transaction. The interface module additionally has a data link connection with each of the golf course reservation systems and is arranged to interface with the different protocols associated with the different golf course reservation systems so that tee-time requests can be accepted at the golf course reservation systems.

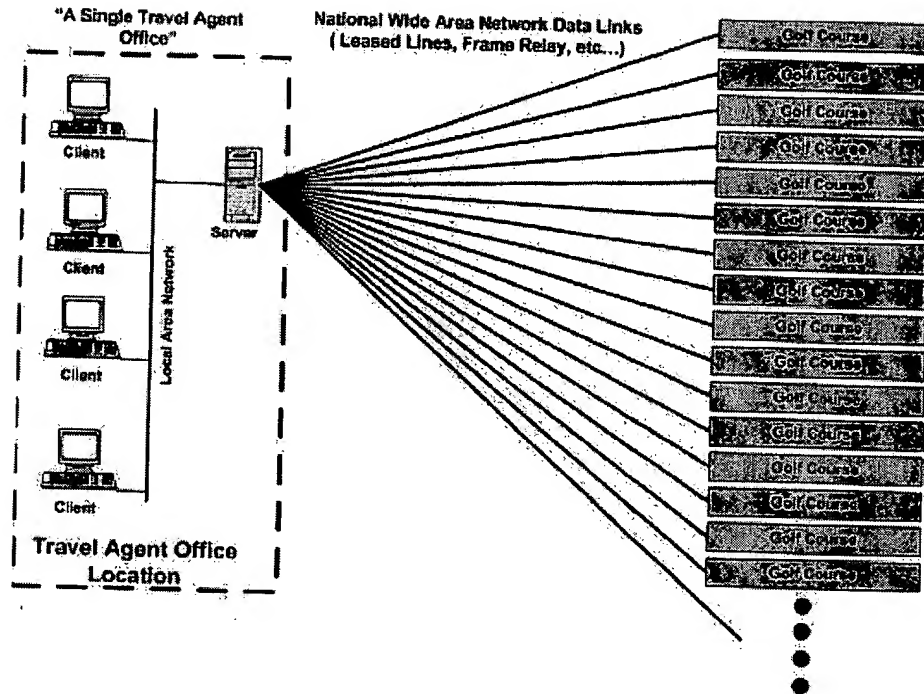
It is respectfully submitted that nothing similar to this is taught in the prior art. The Examiner has relied primarily on the Germain patent. Fig. 8 of the Germain patent allows tee-time reservations to be made, but only for golf courses that are part of a common system and all have the same protocol. This is distinct from the present invention which allows tee-time

reservations to be made on golf courses that are not part of a common reservation system and have different protocols. This in itself is sufficient to distinguish the invention of claim 109 in a fundamental way from anything that is taught by Germain.

The Examiner apparently recognizes that Germain is unlike the present invention in this respect and has additionally cited the patent to Hunt as teaching a means for interfacing a protocol with one or more different protocols. However, the Hunt patent relates to a completely different type of system than the present invention.

In particular, the equipment shown in Fig. 1 of the Hunt patent is all located at a single location such as a travel agent office. Thus, there may be a number of terminals at the travel agent office and individual servers which in turn communicate with a number of external reservation systems such as the relatively small number of airline reservation systems that are in existence. The Hunt system can be visualized with reference to the following Fig. A which shows the travel agent terminals and the server all located within a rectangular box representing the travel agent office. The server has a data link with each external system, identified in Fig. A as golf courses.

FIG. A



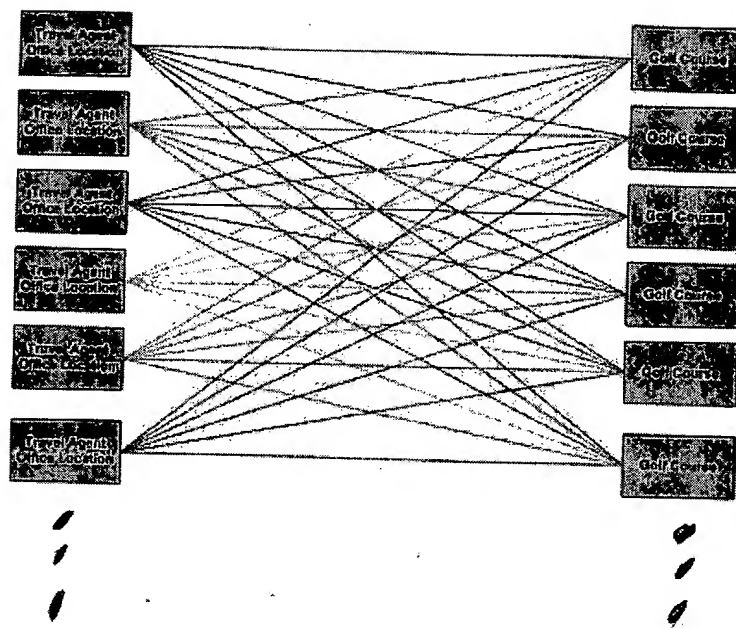
Hunt differs fundamentally from the present invention in that all of the user input terminals are at a single location (the travel agency office) rather than being distributed throughout a wide geographic area at locations remote from each other. That aspect of the Hunt system makes it totally impractical for use in a golf course reservation system of the type claimed in the present application.

In accordance with the Hunt concept, one travel agent office would require connection to all of the 14,000 golf courses that are located within the United States in order to conduct reservations. By way of example, each data link would cost approximately \$1500.00 at current cost, resulting in a total communications equipment cost of approximately \$21,000,000.00 (14,000 golf courses x \$1500.00 per golf course). There would be additional

monthly recurring data line costs that would be approximately \$60.00 per month per data line, or \$840,000.00 per month. In addition, floor space and electricity costs would be incurred. Thus, it would be prohibitively expensive for a travel agent to connect with golf course reservation systems in accordance with the Hunt invention.

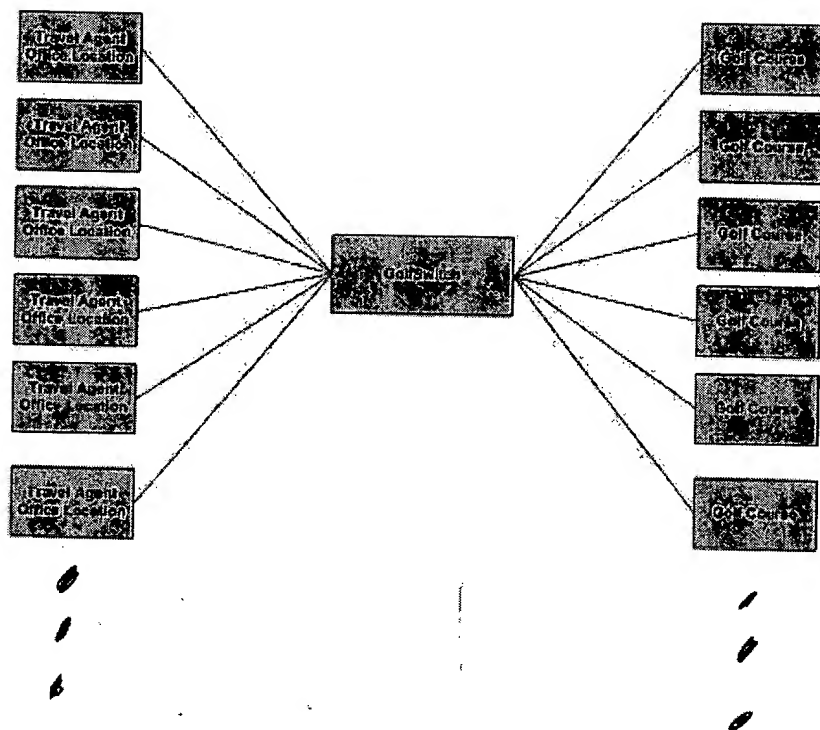
The following Fig. B depicts a system constructed according to the Hunt invention in which all of the travel agents in the United States (approximately 20,000) would be connected with all 14,000 of the golf courses in the United States. The communications equipment cost of \$21,000,000.00 per travel agent times the 20,000 travel agents would amount to \$420,000,000,000.00. The monthly recurring data line costs would be \$840,000.00 per month times 20,000 travel agents, or \$16.8 billion dollars per month. Again, this evidences that attempting to construct a golf course reservation system using the Hunt invention would result in a prohibitively expensive operation.

FIG. B



In contrast to this, Fig. C is a depiction of the system of the present invention, wherein the box entitled "GolfSwitch" represents the interface module that has a data link connection with each travel agent office (all located remotely from each other) and another data link with each golf course. The interface module translates the different protocols that may be necessary to communicate with the different golf courses having different protocols, and this aspect alone clearly differentiates the invention from the Hunt patent and all other known prior art. From Fig. C, it is evident that the number of data lines is reduced from what would be necessary in Fig. B to a manageable level, and the present invention thus represents a significant practical improvement that, for the first time, makes a central reservation system possible for all golf courses, even those that have different communications protocols.

FIG. C



In summary, the present invention is the first golf course reservation apparatus that makes use of a single interface module to connect with travel agent offices or other terminals that are scattered throughout the country and also with each golf course while at the same time making use of a communications protocol that is compatible with the different protocols utilized by different golf courses that are not part of a common system. In this way, it is practical for all travel agents to be able to make electronic tee-time reservations with all golf courses, even those that use different protocols. Neither the Germain patent nor the Hunt patent is capable of anything similar.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claim 109 is clearly allowable over the prior art and represents a significant technological advance that is entitled to

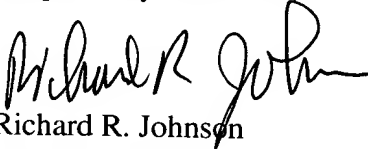
Scott A. Lloyd et al.
Ser. No. 09/272,922

patent protection. All of the other claims remaining in the case are dependent upon claim 109 and are allowable by reason of their dependence upon an allowable parent claim, as well as on their own merits.

It is believed that this application is in full condition for allowance and that a formal notice to that effect should be forthcoming. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference will in anyway expedite the handling of any issues that remain to be resolved, he is invited to call the number listed below at his convenience.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fee which may be due, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-2112.

Respectfully submitted,


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Atty. Docket No.: JAIC.66141